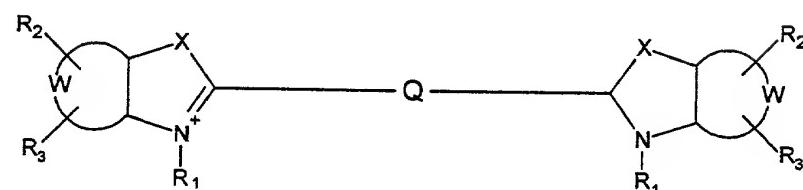


ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A symmetric cyanine of the formula:



(1)

wherein:

X is selected from the group consisting of O, S and C(CH₃)₂;
W represents non-metal atoms required to form a benzo-condensed or a naphto-condensed ring;
R₁ is selected from the group consisting of (CH₂)_nCH₃, (CH₂)_nSO₃⁻ and (CH₂)_nSO₃H, wherein n is an integer selected from 0 to 6 when R₁ is (CH₂)_nCH₃, and n is an integer selected from 3 to 6 when R₁ is (CH₂)_nSO₃⁻ or (CH₂)_nSO₃H;
R₂ and R₃ are independently selected from the group consisting of H, a sulphonic moiety and a sulphonate moiety and
Q is a substituted polymethine bridge.